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COORDINATION OF THE POLICIES AND ACTIVITIES OF THE SPECIALIZED AGENCIES AND OTHER BODIES OF THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM: PREVENTION AND CONTROL OF HIV/AIDS AND PROGRAMMES ADDRESSED TO THE MITIGATION OF ITS NEGATIVE SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONSEQUENCES

Statement submitted by the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council, category I

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 23 and 24 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1296 (XLIV) of 23 May 1968.

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Resolution adopted by the Fifteenth World Congress of the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU)

Resolution on Acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS)

The Fifteenth World Congress of the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, meeting in Caracas from 17 to 24 March 1992,

DEEPLY concerned at the immense scale of human suffering and loss of life caused by the AIDS virus which affects all groups and communities in society in all parts of the world;

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* E/1992/100.

CONCERNED at the widespread disinformation and lack of public awareness that exists on the subject of people infected by the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) but who are still healthy and not affected by AIDS;

DEPLORING that ignorance in this regard often leads to discriminatory or unfair treatment and attitudes at the workplace;

RECOGNIZING that in the vast majority of occupations, work does not involve any risk of acquiring or transmitting HIV from one worker to another or from a worker to a client or vice versa;

EXPRESSING its serious concern, however, that HIV presents a particular risk for workers in a limited number of professions, especially those in the medical and health services, as well as those in some sections of the public service such as police and fire services;

AFFIRMING its support for the World Health Organization's Global Programme on Aids and of the joint efforts undertaken by the WHO and ILO - in cooperation with trade unions and employers - in the framework of their "AIDS and the Workplace" campaign;

EMPHASIZING that trade unions can make a substantial contribution towards the dissemination of appropriate information as well as towards containing the spread of the disease itself through their educational activities;

CALLS upon the relevant national authorities to intensify their action, through all possible means and channels, against the spreading of the HIV and AIDS disease as well as to take adequate measures against the lack of public awareness and correct information in this regard;

URGES industrialized countries to provide the technical and material assistance needed by the most affected countries in the third world in order to enable those countries to develop medical research with a view to containing the spread of the virus and finding ways to eradicate it;

CALLS upon the relevant national authorities, with the active involvement of trade unions and employers' organizations, to promote special programmes dealing with the problem of HIV and AIDS at the workplace, which should be geared towards the dual objective of eliminating discrimination and providing special protection for workers and the general public in sectors that may be particularly exposed to the risk of HIV infection;

SUBMITS that programmes designed to further these aims should be based on the following elements and considerations:

(a) For the prevention of discrimination and stigmatization:

(i) The provision of adequate information should help to avoid discriminatory or unfair treatment and attitudes at the workplace;

(ii) Workers with HIV infection who are healthy should be treated the same way as other workers;

(iii) Workers who are ill and HIV-infected (such as workers with AIDS) should be treated the same way as any other worker with an illness;

(iv) Workers with HIV-related illnesses should be able to work as long as they are medically fit to do so; HIV infection is not, in any way, a reason for terminating employment or changing the working arrangements or working conditions of the person concerned;

(v) Information regarding HIV- or AIDS-affected workers should be kept confidential like all other medical information;

(vi) Employment or pre-employment screening against HIV infection as well as informing the employer about a worker's HIV/AIDS status should be prohibited other than in the exceptional case where AIDS is suspected to have been contracted as a result of his or her work activities and only then with the explicit consent, or at the request of the worker concerned. HIV-infected persons do not normally pose a risk to others in the workplace and are not affected in their ability to carry out their job;

(b) For the protection of workers in sectors with a higher risk level of HIV infection:

(i) Specially designed occupational safety and health programmes (including special regulations and equipment) should be urgently introduced in order to prevent HIV transmission in professions such as medical, health, police and fire fighting services;

(ii) Specially designed training and education programmes should be adequately provided free of charge to all workers in the professional sectors concerned in order to fully acquaint them with the risks and characteristics of HIV infection as well as with the effective application of the above-mentioned special regulations and equipment;

URGES Governments and employers to fully consult and cooperate with workers and trade unions in the development and implementation of HIV- and AIDS-related workplace programmes;

APPEALS to ILO and WHO to explore ways and means to further strengthen their joint action for the prevention and elimination of HIV/AIDS-related problems at the workplace;

CALLS on the ICFTU Executive Board and affiliated organizations to contribute appropriately to international efforts to promote awareness of the HIV/AIDS syndrome and of its devastating human and social consequences.